

## Teaching notes

These activities are designed to help students understand the diverse range of experiences under Nazi rule, from those who supported the Nazis and benefited from their government, to those who suffered greatly under the rule of the Nazis. Most of the character scenarios are based on real people, with the exception of Karl Scheidemann, Ruth Widmar, Sylvia Peters, and Heinrich Fischer, and reflect the diversity of German society at this time.

These tasks will need some background knowledge on the topic, so this could be used as a consolidation, plenary or revision task when students have studied the impact of Nazi rule on German society in the 1930s. Textbooks or other suitable source material could be given to support students when looking at their individual role.

## Task suggestions

### Task 1

Tell students that they are all German citizens in 1935. Give each student a different character card, and ask them to answer the following questions:

1. Do you support or oppose the Nazis? Give three reasons for your answer.
2. How has Nazi rule affected your life?

In role, students could then work in groups to share their 'experiences' of living in Nazi Germany.

### Task 2

Create a human continuum. Students could put themselves in order to show who had the most positive experiences and who had the least positive experiences as a result of Nazi rule. This should generate discussion between students as they try to find their place in relation to others in German society.

This could also be a pair or small group activity, with students sorting the cards into a continuum line on desks.

## Plenary discussion

- Which factors affected an individual's experience of Nazi Germany e.g. race, class, age?
- In general, were the Nazis well supported? Why was this?

<p><b>Martin Niemoller</b></p> <p>You are a Protestant pastor (church leader) born in 1892. You supported Hitler and the Nazis in the 1920s, and Hitler's rise to power in 1933, but have had recent misgivings about some of the more extreme views of the Nazis.</p>	<p><b>Karl Scheidemann</b></p> <p>Born in Germany in 1895, you run a hardware shop. You are an assimilated Jewish shopkeeper. You consider yourself German and you speak German. Your family have lived in Germany for generations.</p>
<p><b>Ika Hugel</b></p> <p>You are a mixed-race German girl, born to a white mother and black father.</p>	<p><b>Ruth Widmar</b></p> <p>You are a member of the League of Young Girls. Your mother likes to listen to French radio programmes at night. Your father did not want you to join, and has stopped you from wearing the uniform.</p>
<p><b>Friedrich Morzik</b></p> <p>You are an 8 year old boy. Your father is a member of the German air force. You are a member of the Pimpfen, the youngest subsection of the Hitler Youth.</p>	<p><b>Sylvia Peters</b></p> <p>Aged 26, you have recently married. You have worked as a primary school teacher for 4 years.</p>
<p><b>Leni Reifenstahl</b></p> <p>Born in 1902, you are an actress and film director. You have won a gold medal in Venice for your film 'Triumph of the Will'; a documentary showing the Nazis in a positive light.</p>	<p><b>Hans Gruber</b></p> <p>Born in 1918, you are a college student. You consider yourself an Edelweiss Pirate. You have not joined the Hitler Youth, but prefer to hang out with your friends of both sexes. You like listening to American music.</p>
<p><b>Helga Muller</b></p> <p>You are a 21 year old, unmarried, pregnant woman without a job. You have entered the first Lebensborn home in Steinhoeing, a tiny village not far from Munich. This home has just been set up by the SS to promote healthy children of strong racial origin. They have promised to look after your child, but you have to prove your 'racial purity' going back 3 generations. The home is well furnished, and you have been treated well so far.</p>	<p><b>Fritz Saukel</b></p> <p>Born in 1894 to nationalist lower-middle class parents, you dropped out of school at 15 to become a sailor on ships around the world. During WWI you were imprisoned by the French. You were a factory worker, then became a gauleiter (district leader) in Bavaria. You are a Nazi and SA member, but are suspicious of Nazi methods of bringing all power to central government rather than local government.</p>
<p><b>Werner von Blomberg</b></p> <p>Born in 1878, you have been army officer since before WWI. Hitler appointed you as Minister of Defence in 1933. You helped to organise the conspiracy against the SA during the Night of the Long Knives.</p>	<p><b>Pierre Seel</b></p> <p>You were born in Alsace in 1923 to a well-off Catholic family of French origin. Your father owns a small business. Recently you have realised that you are gay.</p>
<p><b>Heinrich Fischer</b></p> <p>Born in 1890, you are a construction worker. You are married with 3 children. You lost your job during the Depression, but have recently found work building a new autobahn. Your wages are not what they used to be, but you have enjoyed your first visit to the theatre recently. You are saving through the KDF scheme to buy a VW car.</p>	<p><b>Walter Hess</b></p> <p>You belong to the HJ-Streifendienst (Patrol Force). This is the spying unit within the Hitler Youth. You have reported your father for calling Hitler a crazed Nazi maniac and he has been taken to Dachau camp. You have been promoted to a higher rank in the Hitler Youth as a result.</p>